

StLA FY 1998—Survey Methodology

This report contains data on state library agencies in the 50 states and the District of Columbia for state fiscal year 1998. The data were collected through the State Library Agencies (STLA) Survey, FY 1998, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The reporting unit for the survey is the state library agency. (Source: ED Tabs: State Library Agencies FY 1998, Appendix A)

Survey Software

The STLA Survey is conducted using customized survey software, designed to minimize response burden and provide NCES with state-edited data requiring minimal follow-up for data quality. Respondents are alerted to questionable data during the data entry process by pop-up messages that prompt them to verify or revise the data, as appropriate. The software also produces error/warning reports of these questionable data, for viewing on-screen or as printed copy. The survey software and user guide are available to respondents on diskette and over the Internet. The user guide contains the instructions for using the software and a facsimile of the survey. The completed survey can be returned by regular mail on diskette, or transmitted over the Internet via email or a File Transfer Program (FTP).

Mail-out, Editing, and Follow-up

To reduce response burden, the survey was pre-filled with prior-year data for items where the data are not expected to change annually—most of Parts A through E and some of Part N, or about 40 percent of the items. The respondent was requested to review the pre-entered data and update any information that changed. All other data cells were pre-filled with a -2 (numeric items) or left blank (alphanumeric items) for respondents to fill in, not update. The software does not permit the respondent to save a data file for submission to NCES if a -2 remains in any data cell. The respondent was instructed to enter -1 for items requiring numeric data if they did not know the answer, and to leave alphanumeric items blank if they could not provide the data. A zero (0) is a reported response and indicates the STLA had none of the item. Missing data were not imputed.

The survey was transmitted to the states over the Internet (or sent by regular mail upon request) in mid-October of 1998 and had a due date of January 15, 1999. Nonresponse follow-up was conducted shortly after the due date. The last state submission was received on September 22, 1999. The data were edited from January through September of 1999. After data were received from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the preliminary national file was reviewed for data quality by the STLA Steering Committee, NCES, and the Bureau of the Census (the data collection and processing agent for NCES). States were contacted to request verification or correction of questionable data before the final file was produced.

The STLA Survey software performs four types of data edit checks:

1. Relational edit checks. A data consistency check between related data elements. For example, an error message is generated if the STLA is designated as a Federal depository library but does not indicate the type of Federal depository library.
2. Out-of-range edit checks. A comparison of data reported for an item to the "acceptable range" of values. For example, an error message is generated if annual Circulation per annual Library Visits is less than 0.5.
3. Arithmetic edit checks. An arithmetic accuracy check of a reported total and its parts to the generated total. For example, an error message is generated if Total Operating Expenditures is not equal to the sum of its parts (Total Staff Expenditures, Collection Expenditures, and Other Operating Expenditures).

4. Blank/zero/invalid edit checks. A check of reported data against acceptable values. For example, an error message is generated if Book/Serial Volumes is 0 or blank.

Survey Data Items

The survey collected data on 518 items, including the agency's location in state government, public service hours, number and types of service outlets, type and size of collections, library service transactions and development transactions, electronic services and information, allied operations, staff, and income and expenditures. Data were also collected on STLA services to public, academic, school, and special libraries, and to library systems. The data items and definitions are provided in the survey facsimile at the end of this report.

Universe

The state library agencies in the 50 states and the District of Columbia (51 total) comprise the survey universe.

Response Rate

Unit Response. The FY 1998 STLA Survey had a 100 percent response rate.

Item Response. Most items had a 100 percent response rate. The lowest response rate to any item was 86.3 percent (library visits). The remaining items with less than a 100 percent response rate are listed below by survey item; they all had a 98.0 percent response rate:

- 006 - Zip + 4 (physical location address)
- 011 - Zip + 4 (mailing address)
- 016 - Internet (chief officer)
- 095 - Serial subscriptions
- 111 - Interlibrary loans received from other
libraries/document delivery services
- 118 - Total attendance at continuing education
program events

Reporting Period. The FY 1998 STLA Survey requested data for state fiscal year 1998, except for Part B-Governance and Part I-Staff data which were requested as of October 1, 1998. The fiscal year of most states is July 1 to June 30. Exceptions are New York (April 1 to March 31); Texas (September 1 to August 31); and Alabama, the District of Columbia, and Michigan (October 1 to September 30).

Using the Data to Make Comparisons. The STLA data are not imputed for item nonresponse, so national totals may be underestimated for some items. State comparisons should be made with caution because states may vary in their fiscal year reporting periods and adherence to survey definitions. The District of Columbia, while not a state, is included in the survey. Special care should be used in comparing District of Columbia data with state data.